



The most important subject that is to come before the annual meeting of the Planters' Association, which falls due on the 20th instant, is the labor question, and the report of the Labor Committee of that organization will be looked forward to by the public with great interest. The recent promotion of so many great sugar enterprises, with such a general distribution of stock in the corporations, has made nearly all classes of people in the islands interested parties. This fact has also complicated the labor question. Heretofore, arrangements for labor were nearly adequate to the requirements, but the development of these new sugar estates will require such large numbers of men that, unless some plan for the importation of free labor is hit upon, the price of labor will rise to prohibitory figures. Even now wages are increasing very appreciably.

In Hawaii the importation of labor to meet the growing requirements of the progressive wave of prosperity that is sweeping over us is an absolute necessity. Under annexation, contract labor is an impossibility, and how to induce the importation of free labor and provide for the payment of passage money by the laborer is the knotty problem to be solved.

Ex-Minister Damon's rebuff in attempting Italian immigration has met with a parallel in Cuba, where a recent scheme to colonize Italians has met with bitter resistance from the property owners, the latter claiming that the Italians would not aid in the development of the country's agricultural and industrial resources nor assimilate with the native population.

From the interviews or opinions, given in another column, by the consuls representing the three nations from which we have drawn our labor, many interesting facts are drawn. The most appalling of them, perhaps, is the statement of the Japanese consul that by the first of January there will be upwards of 50,000 of his countrymen located here. This outnumbers all other classes in Hawaii except the Hawaiians. As free laborers, as they must be under American law, it is doubtful if the Japanese will prove desirable. The propensity of the "little brown man" to strike is likely to jeopardize our principal industry, which requires steady labor the year round. It is noteworthy that the Japanese consul concedes that his countrymen work more steadily here under the contract system than they do in their own country which seems evident that they cannot be too fully depended upon under a free system. The Chinese consul also remarks the same thing concerning the Chinese. But as the Chinese will probably be excluded under American law, they cannot be considered a possibility

Senor Canavarrho's statement is of the greatest importance. The Portuguese have been tried, as both contract and free laborers, and have not been found wanting. Furthermore, they make good citizens and have accumulated wealth in a few years. Their criminal record is the most extraordinary of any people that have been induced to come to Hawaii. Although representing nearly 15 per cent. of the population, no Portuguese has ever been convicted of murder and in all other ways their respect of the law has been particularly noticeable. The stability of these people and desire to earn their money, is well known. Senor Canavarrho also states that his people are still emigrating, but prefer other parts of the world, such as Brazil and South Africa to Hawaii because the domestic comforts which were afforded them by the planters of the old regime are not furnished to-day, and immigration to this country has become unpopular. Would it not be well for the Planters' Association to invite Senor Canavarrho to address them on this subject, pointing out what improvements are necessary on this score to induce the immigration to Hawaii of a people who have proved to be our most efficient free labor. The Senor has been here as the representative of the Portuguese Government for nearly twenty years, and is probably the best posted man on labor in the islands.

Mr. Damon's mission to Italy is watched with great interest, and it is hoped it will be fruitful of beneficial results. Every effort

should be made to get a communication from Mr. Damon before the meeting of the Planters' Association reporting progress. But, with all due respect to Mr. Damon and those who think as he does, we are impelled to ask why, if the immigration of a Latin race is to be encouraged, we should not cling to the Portuguese, who have been tried, rather than experiment with other nationalities? The experiment with Italian labor in the United States has not in general been successful. To be sure Mr. Damon proposes to encourage the agricultural classes to come here; but even if this effort at selection is successful, the same difficulty complained of by Senor Canavarrho, namely, the lack of domestic comforts on the plantation, would soon stop the immigration. Furthermore, how is the selection to be made? What is to prevent the rough element of the cities—that are a curse in the United States—from following in the wake? The Portuguese of the Azores are essentially an agricultural people, many who come here have worked in sugar-cane fields from childhood under climatic conditions almost identical with those in Hawaii.

American opinion on the Transvaal is slow in its final judgment, and anything but unanimous at the present.

The stand of the Boers as pioneers fighting for independence naturally predisposes American sentiment, aside from the actual merits of the case, somewhat in Boer favor, while, on the other hand, the position of the Anglo-Saxons, fighting against "taxa-

tion without representation," cannot fail to appeal almost equally to the average American. Whatever the cry against British rapacity, the fact remains that, viewed purely in the light of progress, the Boers have been a stumbling-block, and have persistently endeavored to accrue all the advantages of British capital without, in the case of tax-payers and resident foreigners giving the slightest *quid pro quo*. Americans as well as English have come under the "Ban of the Boer."

Quoting from the *Literary Digest*:

In Boerdom the courts of justice are entirely at the mercy of the President, who not long since removed the highest judges, because they would not decide according to his pleasure. When the independence of the Transvaal was conceded in 1881, it expressly covenanted to put all foreigners entering the Transvaal upon an equal footing with the Boers themselves in every respect except the right of suffrage. So far from doing this the Boers have purposely arranged taxation so that nine tenths of it shall be paid by foreigners; they have taxed foreigners heavily to support schools in which the Dutch language is exclusively used; they have insisted that even private schools, maintained by foreigners at their own expense, should teach Dutch on an equal footing with English; they have maintained a government so corrupt that, according to the statement of an American newspaper friendly to the Boers, President Kruger has amassed \$25,000,000 within the last ten years, although doing no business; they have maintained a monopoly in dynamite, an indispensable instrument in mining, in the profits of which President Kruger has largely shared; they have kept towns, built exclusively by foreigners, under exclusive Boer control, and have refused to permit decent sanitation, thereby doubling the death-rate; they have prohibited Americans and Englishmen from holding public meetings; they have denied to them even the right of petition; they have removed their own supreme court from office, simply because its decisions rendered some small justice to foreigners; and they have prohibited any Englishman or American from carrying arms of any kind, while furnishing to every Boer boy of sixteen years of age a rifle and a revolver, and surrounding Johannesburg with Krupp guns, the entire cost of which has been taken out of the pockets of Englishmen and Americans.

Futile and repeated appeals to the Boer Government have resulted in the present war. This is, of course, the case from the British side.

Whether the Boer's view of the question counterbalances the above facts is a matter for the Nation to decide.

America's opinion is naturally an important issue. It will be the only absolutely unbiased judgment possible. The positions taken by the European Powers are plainly swayed by diplomatic motives. Of the two powers favorable to Britain, Germany and Italy, German reasons for non-intervention are superficially plain. The French and Russian satisfaction over British reverses are as easily explained as that of Belgium and Austria. Aside from the mere fact of rejoicing over the reverses of any dangerous factor in the ring of the powers, Russia and France especially, have old wounds that have never lost their smart.

The firm stand taken by McKinley as to non-mediation in the Transvaal, apart from its showing the trend of the Government's feeling towards Britain, also serves as a reminder that from a strictly legal point of view the question of mediation in the Transvaal is parallel to our own situation in the Philippines. The substance of the dispute is the status of the Transvaal, as the Philippines, whether the two republics are to be recognized as "sovereign international states."

Putting aside the merits of the individual cases, this is the point of view and all governments proposing mediation must view the question in this light.

Any attempt at mediation on the part of foreign powers between our own Govern-